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Message Text

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60
ACTION SS-25

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C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 5939

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR IS EG LY (LIBYA)
SUBJ: RABIN'S PERCEPTION OF EGYPTIAN/LIBYAN RELATIONS

1. DURING A CONVERSATION WITH SECRETARY USERY ON AUGUST 30, I ASKED PRIME MINISTER RABIN FOR HIS VIEWS ON THE CURRENT EGYPTIAN/ LIBYAN SITUATION. HE REPLIED THAT THIS IS A PERIOD OF HIGH TENSION BUT HE DOES NOT SEE MILITARY ACTION AS LIKELY. WHAT WOULD BE PURPOSE OF SUCH MILITARY ACTION AND WHAT WOULD BE ITS COSTS? ANY MILITARY INTERVENTION WOULD MEET THE STRONG OBJECTION OF OTHER ARAB STATES BECAUSE IT WOULD BE CONSIDERED A DANGEROUS PRECEDENT. ANY MILITARY ANNEXATION WOULD BE EVEN MORE SENSITIVE. MILITARY ACTION COULD ONLY BE A POSSIBILITY IF COMBINED WITH SOME SORT OF UPRISING WITHIN LIBYA.

2. THE UNLIKELIHOOD OF MILITARY ACTION ARISES FROM GEOGRAPHIC FACTORS, OF WHICH SADAT MUST BE AWARE. THE LIBYAN BORDER IS 800 KILOMTERS FROM CAIRO AND TRIPOLI IS 2400 KILOMETERS. EGYPTIAN TROOPS WOULD HAVE TO COVER THAT DISTANCE BECAUSE THE CAPTURE OF TRIPOLI WOULD HAVE TO BE THE OBJECTIVE IF MILITARY ACTION WERE TO BE MEANINGFUL. THE CONSIDERATION OF THE LIKELY GOALS AND THE PRICE NECESSARY TO ACHIEVE THEM LED RABIN TO BELIEVE NO MILITARY ACTION IS LIKELY. CERTAINLY LEBANON WOULD REMIND ANY ARAB LEADER OF THE DIFFICULTY OF REACHING QUICK AND EASY MILITARY VICTORIES.

3. THIS BEING SO, THE IMPORTANCE OF POLITICAL FACTORS IN THE ARAB WORLD IS EVEN GREATER. IN THIS CONNECTION, RABIN NOTED THE
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GROWING INTERRELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ARAB STATES. "THIS IS NOT THE

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ARAB WORLD WE ONCE KNEW", HE SAID.
TOON

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